

# ELGIN CATHEDRAL

*Ministry of Public Building and Works  
Official Guide-book*

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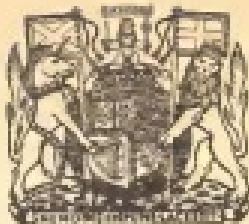
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*Cover design: Human grotesques derived from a sculptured basin preserved in the Cathedral museum.*



# Elgin Cathedral

THE CATHEDRAL KIRK OF MORAY

DESCRIPTION

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HISTORY

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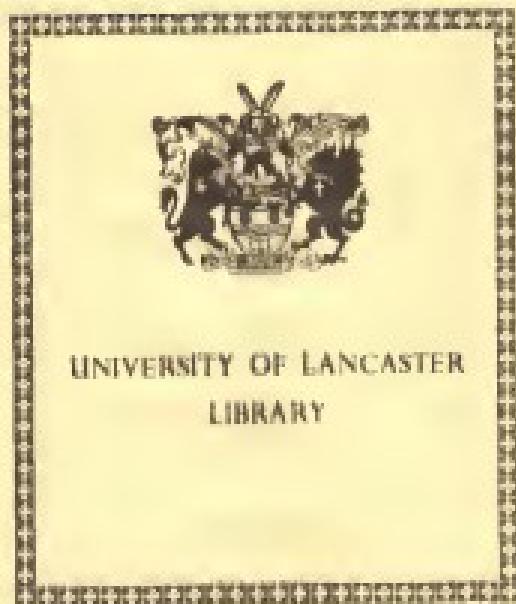
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# Description

## *The Site and Precinct*

THE ruins of the Cathedral of Moray rise majestically from a level area of ground on the southern side of the River Lossie. The site is little more than half a mile to the east of Lady Hill,<sup>1</sup> on which stood in medieval times the Castle of Elgin. Under the protection of the towers and palisades of the Castle, the town of Elgin grew and flourished. That the Cathedral Kirk and its precinct were not within the boundaries of the town is clearly indicated in the foundation Charter of 1224.

On the north of the City of Elgin the Lossie winds its way through haugh land by many turnings, but immediately east of the Cathedral its course for a short distance lies in a southerly direction. Part of this straight stretch formed a natural boundary for the Cathedral precinct, the remaining sides of which were enclosed by a high wall provided with fortified gateways. The ruin of the eastern gateway or "post", known as the Panno Port, stands a short distance to the south-east of the Cathedral. It was of considerable height and the "pend" was provided with a portcullis in addition to massive doors of oak.

Within the precinct stood the Cathedral Kirk, the Bishop's lodging probably,<sup>2</sup> and the buildings referred to in old descriptions as the "College of the Chanonrie", which contained the dwellings of the Cathedral dignitaries and prebendaries.

When the episcopal chair of the Bishops of Moray was permanently installed in the Kirk of the Holy Trinity, "juxta Elgym", in 1224, little time was lost in enlarging and completing the building, and shortly after Andrew de Moravia had been consecrated Bishop, the Cathedral was dedicated.<sup>3</sup> The architectural features of the south and north transepts<sup>4</sup> suggest that they were part of this church which was given by the Pope to the Bishop and Clergy of Moray.

## *The Plans*

At first the Cathedral consisted of a quire and presbytery, a crossing

<sup>1</sup> The Castle Chapel was dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

<sup>2</sup> The Bishop's principal residence was the Palace of Spynie situated two miles northward.

<sup>3</sup> Commemoration crosses, cut in the walls, are to be seen in the following order of dating; in the south transept, in the Presbytery and at the west end of the nave.

<sup>4</sup> A part of the north wall of the quire also belongs to this period.

surmounted by a tower, north and south transepts, an aisled nave and two massive western towers. With the exception of the ground floors of the western towers no part of the original Kirk was vaulted with stone. The roofing and the spires were of timber, covered with lead. Soon after the completion of the building, the three eastern "bays" of the south aisle of the nave were extended southwards, the long arm of the transept permitting the double aisle formation.

In the year 1270 the Cathedral was burned, and evidence of this particular destruction is to be seen on the east sides of the western towers, immediately above the water-tabling of the timber roofs of the original aisles. A great rebuilding now took place; the Kirk was enlarged to its present dimensions and a chapter house was built. The nave was completed with double aisles on both sides, introducing a French feature of cathedral planning. The aisles in the westernmost "bay" were provided with doorways, that in the south wall having a projecting porch. The quire and presbytery were doubled in length and provided with north and south stone-vaulted aisles of five bays. The chapter-house was built to the north and was connected with the north quire aisle by a vestibule. Thus at the close of the thirteenth century, in distant Moray, a great masterpiece of ecclesiastical architecture was brought into being.

A century later the Cathedral Kirk was thus described by Bishop Alexander Bar in a letter to King Robert III: "My church was the ornament of the realm, the glory of the kingdom, the delight of foreigners and stranger guests; an object of praise and glorification in foreign realms by reason of the multitude of those serving and the beauty of its ornament and in which we believe God was rightly worshipped; not to speak of its high belfries, its ancient furniture and its innumerable jewels". The letter was written immediately after the burning of the Cathedral and chapter-house by the "Wolf of Badenoch".

Once again, the damage caused by conflagration necessitated extensive repairs and rebuilding and a re-roofing of the western part of the nave. The gable wall above the western portal was taken down, reconstructed and given a large traceried window, and the doorways of the portal were remodelled. The main piers of the arcading of the western part of the nave were renewed and a new roof was provided. The crossing and mid-tower were rebuilt and new tracery was made for the wheel window in the east gable of the presbytery. The intense heat caused by the burning of the chapter house roof so damaged the masonry that the interior of the building had to be refaced. New traceried windows were provided, and a central stone pillar with a rib-and-panel vaulted ceiling was introduced.

Three periods of Gothic architecture are represented in the Cathedral Kirk; these are the "Transitional", the "First Pointed", and the "Second Pointed" styles. The First Pointed style corresponds to that known in England as "Early English", and the Second to that known as "Decorated". The great building tradition which prevailed in the province of Moray for many generations was due partly to the fine quality of the local sandstone, partly to the knowledge of mason-work and building introduced by the Cistercian monks when they built Kinloss Abbey (founded 1151). A close study of the masonry, the moulded details, and the carved enrichments of the Cathedral Kirk clearly demonstrates the skill of the designers and the excellence of the workmanship of the masons and craftsmen.

Unfortunately no fragment remains to enable the imagination to conjure up the quality and character of the imagery and altar furnishings, or of the carved screens and stalls of oak, the painted mural and ceiling decorations, or the precious beauty of the many windows which were filled with stained glass and gave the effect of a mass of translucent jewels.

In 1313 the Bishops of Moray acquired an interest in a farm called La Fermette in the village of Grisy in France,<sup>1</sup> and doubtless as a result of their intercourse with that country objects of ecclesiastical art would from time to time be brought from France or Flanders for the beautifying of the Cathedral. Bishop Leslie, writing just before the Reformation, describes the building as "a noble and notable a kirke in beautie and decore that with us it has na make (match) set furth, trimmed and maid ornat, with the Bisoppe's Cathedra and college of the Chanonrie". George Buchanan, the historian and tutor to King James VI, considered it to be "the most beautiful of all (Cathedrals) that has been erected in Scotland".

### *The Final Destruction*

At the Reformation the hand of destruction again fell on this magnificent building. In 1567 the roofs were stripped of their lead, which was sent to Holland to provide money to pay the soldiers during Moray's Regency, and within a few years nothing was left but the shell of the building. Taylor, "the water poet", an Englishman, who visited Elgin in 1618, narrates in his journal, "I went to Elgen in Murray, an ancient citie, where there stood a faire and beautiful church with three steeples, the walls of it and the steeples all yet standing; but the roofs, windowes, and many marble monuments and tombes of honourable and sworthie personages all broken and defaced;

<sup>1</sup> In what is now the Department of Seine-et-Marne.



CIRCA 1230



CIRCA 1250

CIRCA 1270  
AND AFTERWARD

BLOCK PLANS SHOWING DEVELOPMENT OF CATHEDRAL

this was done in the time when "ruine bare rule and Knox knocked downe churches". Although lacking the protection of the roof "for several score years", the painted timber rood-screen with the great painting of the Crucifixion which was framed in the arch over the loft, remained in excellent condition until it was taken down and destroyed in 1640 by a minister of Elgin named Gilbert Ross. The Crucifixion faced the west and a "doom picture", or representation of the Day of Judgment, faced the east. The canopies of the screen and its loft were decorated with gold stars. The tracery of the great west window was destroyed and monuments were defaced by Cromwell's troops. Finally, on Easter Sunday, 1711, the great mid-tower fell to the ground, bringing with it the north transept, and the arcades and walls of the nave. Thomas Pennant, the English traveller, described the appearance of the building as it was in 1771, thus: "but that (the tower) in the centre with the spire and whole roofs are fallen in, and form most aweful fragments, mixed with the battered monuments of knights and prelates". It remained thus until John Shanks, a worthy shoemaker of Elgin, "cleared away with his own hands many thousand cubic yards of rubbish disclosing the bases of the pillars, collecting the carved fragments and introducing some order and propriety", as recorded on his tombstone at the south-east corner of the kirkyard.

### *The West Façade*

The west façade of the Cathedral with its flanking towers is suggestive of French influence. The towers with their elongated buttresses are in the First Pointed style; and each was ninety feet high, contained four storeys and terminated in a lead-covered wooden spire. Access to the first floors is by a wheel-stair at the south-east angle of the southern tower. The entrance to the stairway at the ground level was originally on the outside of the Kirk and faced eastwards. At first it was intended to carry this stairway up higher, but, an alteration being made in the plan, it was ceiled with a rib-and-panel vault at the first-floor level. This vault is of star formation ornamented with carved keystones or bosses at the junction of the ribs. The ascent to the upper-floors and the tower-heads was by wheel-stairs in the walls at the abutments of the intervening gable. These stairs are entered from the ends of the arcaded gallery connecting the towers at the first-floor level, and were also connected by passages at the sill level of the great window and at the wall-walk level above it. There was access from these stairways to the clerestory passages and the wall-walks of the nave. The interior walls of the tower still show the effect of the heat caused by the burning timbers of the floors and the spires. In the reconstruction of

the northern tower a vaulted ceiling and new windows were introduced into the first-floor chamber. This room now contains many fragments of carved and moulded details.

### *The West Portal*

The great west portal is crowned by triple, crocketted gables, each of which contains an arched panel, enriched with typical 13th-century dog-tooth and trefoil patterns. The central gable has a string course ornamented with dragonsque carvings, and the panels of the side gables are flanked by quattrefolts. The recessed in-go of the doorway is in the First Pointed style; it consists of eight engaged shafts with round-moulded caps and bases with a simple cavetto between each shaft. The arch-head contains amongst the boldly cut mouldings four rows of dog-tooth, two of stem and trefoil, and an outer order which had a vine-and-leaf decoration; all these enrichments were undercut. The inner screen of the portal with the two doorways is a reconstruction after the 1390 burning and is in the Second Pointed style. The carvings are typical of the period. Bands of realistic oak branches with leaf and acorn, and vine leaf and stem, outline the doorways. Above the doorways is a vesica-shaped panel framed with a "vine" enrichment and furnished at its base with a corbel in leaf form. This panel formerly contained a carved representation of the Holy Trinity to whom the Cathedral Kirk was dedicated. On either side of the panel are kneeling "angels" with swinging censers surrounded by sprays of leaves.

The great window, occupying the wall space above the portal, is also a reconstruction of the later period. The original gable with its group of lancets was destroyed by the intense heat of the conflagration which had raged furiously at this end of the Kirk. When the present window was complete with tracery, it presented a design of considerable elegance, the upper part containing a highly developed "wheel" pattern and the lower an arrangement of seven lights. It will be noticed that it is not centred between the two towers. A possible explanation for this is that the window was drawn out to full size and prepared at the quarry and that a mistake was made in the dimensions. The wall walk passing above the window was furnished with a traceried parapet behind which rose the apex of the gable. The parapet was carried by the existing corbel-course. It is enriched with oak-leaf design and has, as a central feature, the royal arms of Scotland—a shield charged with a lion rampant within a double trellis flory counterflory, suspended by a guige from an oak branch. Flanking this shield on the dexter side, at a slightly lower level, is a shield similarly hung, charged with three cushions lozengeways, within

PLATE I. *The cathedral from the south-east*





PLATE 2. *The east front*

a royal treasure, for the See of Moray.<sup>1</sup> On the sinister side is a shield with guige attached and supported by a pastoral staff. The shield bears a lion rampant within a bordure charged with eight roses, the arms of Bishop Columba de Dunbar (1422-1436), the builder of the reconstructed gable.

### The Nave

On entering the Cathedral it will be noticed that the lower part of the internal façade of the gables has been refaced when the doorway was reconstructed, and that the arcaded mural passage is also a work of the early fifteenth-century period, but carried out in the older style of architecture. Human faces, leaf patterns and owls are represented in the carved corbels of the hood mouldings of the arcading, and on the sides of the towers, which face each other. The stone benches, the corbels, the arches and the upper wall surfaces, as well as the responds at the angles of the towers, are all repair work. This part of the building still bears evidence of the 1390 burning, especially where the masonry above the wall-benching on the south side of the northern tower is split and discoloured.

The nave arcade, which is now reduced to the ground level, had six "bays" or divisions, each being marked on the exterior elevations by buttresses. The full height of the Cathedral Kirk and the outline of its steep-pitched roof can be judged by the west gable. The clerestory windows (those above the level of the aisle roofs) were connected by a mural passage which led round the building and gave access for the care and maintenance of the glass. The broken ends of these passages can be seen where they emerge from the western towers. Above them are the entrances from the towers to the wall walks of the nave.

Unlike contemporary buildings in England, this Scottish Cathedral never had a triforium or blind storey; this was due to the unusual height of the nave arcading and to the flat pitch of the timber roofs of the original aisles. The porch was an important feature of the south façade; it was ceiled with rib-and-panel vaulting and furnished with an upper storey. There is no evidence to show that a porch was built for the corresponding doorway in the north aisle.

It has already been indicated that the oldest part of the south aisle extension is in the three easternmost bays. They were unlike the other aisles in that they were ceiled with timber and not with stone. The carved caps of the responds and wall corbels show variations of the "water leaf" motif; wyverns are introduced into one of these patterns.<sup>2</sup> An interesting and unusual feature in the architecture of this aisle is

<sup>1</sup> Originally these arms were borne by the family of Randolph, Earl of Moray, but they were adopted later by the family of Dunbar on succeeding to the Earldom.

<sup>2</sup> There are somewhat similar carvings at Lincoln Cathedral.

the interlacing of the arch mouldings which suggests foreign influence.<sup>1</sup> The aisle appears to have been built during the third quarter of the thirteenth century. The treatment of the nave exterior-elevations was unique in Britain, each "bay" had a separate gable roof, which, instead of running into the main wall of the nave, was hipped, thus keeping the lighting of the clerestory windows free from obstruction. The traceried windows in the second and third bays of the south aisle are reconstructions of fifteenth-century date. Each division of the outer aisles provided a chapel dedicated to a particular saint or saints. These chapels were partitioned off by parclose screens of oak and were furnished with wall-presses or aumbries and with piscine.<sup>2</sup> At the east end of the nave was the fifteenth-century rood-screen and loft. The Crucifixion and Doom paintings already referred to occupied a space immediately under the east arch of the crossing, the Doom facing towards the quire.

### *The Mid-Tower*

The mid-tower with its great supporting pillars was rebuilt during the episcopates of Bishop Innes (1407-1414) and Bishop Henry de Lychton (1414-1422), but in 1506, during the episcopate of Andrew Forman, part of it fell, and its restoration begun in the following year was not completed until thirty years later. The lantern of the tower, which was lighted by an arched window in the centre of each wall, appears to have had an internal arcade above the level of the arches and to have been ceiled with a fine rib-and-panel vault. Fragments of carved ornament, which apparently belonged to this part of the tower, are worthy subjects for the study of design and workmanship. The examples to be noted are the leaf-and-berry enriched caps of the great pillars, the caps from the smaller pillars of the internal arcading, and the animal and heraldic bosses from the ceiling, which are now in the collection of architectural carvings preserved in the chambers of the western tower.

The mid-tower was higher than the western towers. A stairway in the north-west angle led to the tower-head, which was furnished with a parapet and spire replaced later by a gabled roof similar to that on the mid-tower of the neighbouring Priory Kirk of Pluscardyn.<sup>3</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> This feature occurs in the arch moulds of the south aisle of the Choir at Ely Cathedral.

<sup>2</sup> Piscina—a perforated stone basin for carrying away the water used in rinsing altar vessels.

<sup>3</sup> The mid-tower roof of the Abbey Kirk of Sweetheart in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright is of this type. There was also an example, now destroyed, at the Cathedral of Aberdeen.

engraving published in *Theatrum Scotorum* of Captain John Slezer shows the tower as it was at the close of the seventeenth century.

### *Bishop Innes's Tomb*

Bishop Innes was buried beside the north-west pillar of the crossing. The monument, of which a few fragments remain, was of considerable size and displayed a life-size kneeling figure of the Bishop, placed on the top of the tomb-chest and under a richly moulded canopy with "saints" and "angels" and vine and oak motifs. The effigy, now headless, was recovered from the fallen debris of the tower and it occupies a temporary stance at the east end of the south aisle of the nave. Vested in alb and cope, the figure is kneeling on a cushion which lies on a stool covered with linen-fold drapery. The gloved hands are joined in an attitude of prayer and the pastoral staff is supported against the left shoulder. The tomb-chest on which the figure was mounted bore an inscription in two lines and of this there is now only a detached fragment. It reads:

*per septenarium potenter edificavit et  
diligenter continuavit et obiit anno dnni*

A record dating from the close of the seventeenth century gives the whole of the missing portion, except the date, as:

*"Hic jacet Reverendus in Christo Pater D.D. Jobannes de Innes bujns ecclesiae Episcopis, qui hoc notabile opus incepit"*

### *The Large Figures from the Tower*

In the south aisle, on either side of the kneeling effigy, are set up the remains of the two large-scale figures; one represents Bishop Innes and the other a knight. These statues once stood in leaf-enriched corbelled niches at the exterior angles on the west side of the tower. The Bishop is coped and mitred and holds the pastoral staff in his gloved left hand, his right hand having been raised in benediction. The remains of the other figure display the military costume of the early fifteenth century, i.e. tippet of chain mail, armpieces of plate, a short surcoat girded with a massive and ornamented sword-belt, a long shirt of chain mail with thigh-pieces of plate and armour, for the lower part of the legs; the left hand grasps a dagger, and the right has held a sword pointing downwards.

### *The Transepts*

The transepts are the oldest part of the edifice. The clerestory windows of the south and north gables with their inner arcades mark the

building as being in the Transitional style. Each transept contained two chapels; the most northerly was dedicated to Saint Thomas à Becket of Canterbury and the two in the south transept to Saint Peter and Saint Paul. The lower parts of the western walls of the transepts have been arcaded. The south transept has a doorway in the south wall at the south-west angle and above it is a small vesica-shaped window furnished with stone window-seats suggesting that there was a room at this level on the western side of the transept. To the east of the doorway there are two mural tombs, both insertions of fifteenth-century date. The tombs have panelled fronts and their canopies are crocketed, moulded and carved. The side-buttress features carry heraldic shields. The easternmost tomb is that of Bishop James Stewart (1460-1463); his coat of arms with pastoral staff is at the head, and at the foot there is a shield representing the arms of Stewart quartered with those of Mar. Paterus of vine and of oak leaves and acorns adorn the canopy. The effigy in a coat of mail, lying within the recess, belonged to the tomb of Robert Innes of Invermarkie which originally stood in the Chapel of St. Peter, at the right-hand corner of the altar. The jupon or short surcoat is charged with the three stars from the Innes coat of arms. The other tomb has an unidentified coat of arms at its head and at the foot an impaled shield charged with the Stewart arms. The recess contains the recumbent effigy in military costume of the mid-fifteenth century, and the word *OBEMETO FINIS* are cut on a vertical slab behind the figure. To the east of the tombs is a mural piscina and near it on the wall is a consecration cross.

The south exterior elevation is well proportioned, the vertical lines of buttresses and the steep pitch of the surmounting gable tending to accentuate its height. The in-goes of the narrow doorway carried three columns with detached shafts. The caps on the west side are boldly cut in a pattern of leaf-and-berry, while those on the opposite side portray a leaf pattern of more simple character. A large-scale "dog-tooth" ornament enriches the mouldings of the arched head. The lower windows are lancets and those of the clerestory are round-headed and have nook shafts. Above in the gable were three graduated lancets contained within a semi-circular arch. There were one large lancet and two clerestory lancets in the west wall, and in the east wall there was a lancet over each altar with clerestory above.

The architectural treatment of the north transept was similar to that of the south but in place of a doorway leading to the outside there was a stairway in the corresponding angle. This led to the clerestory passage and the wall walk, and provided the first stage of approach to the wall-head of the mid-tower. St. Thomas à Becket's<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Abbey of Arbroath was dedicated to this Saint.

Chapel was the burial-place of the family of Dunbar. The tomb recesses have been destroyed but two effigies remain. The jupon of the warrior in armour (fifteenth century) bears the three cushions lozenge-way for Dunbar. The other figure, vested in a long flowing gown and cloak, is of earlier date and is now defaced. The foot-rest of this effigy is carved with a representation of the "lion and the lamb". On the west wall is a mural tablet of post-Reformation date; it is in the early classic renaissance style and is a memorial to the family of Dunbar of Bennetfield.

### *The Quire*

The quire screen or pulpitum, probably constructed of stone, stretched across the kirk under the eastern arch of the crossing. The oak quire stalls for the secular canons occupied the space immediately to the east of the pulpitum and extended along the walls. The bishop's throne was situated at the east end of the southern range of stalls, and at the base of the large pier. Parts of the mouldings of the pier and of the arch springing from its western side have been cut away to accommodate the throne which was furnished with an elaborately carved canopy. It is of interest to note that the mason who removed the mouldings was careful to decorate the ends of their sections. The first quire and presbytery together occupied the total space of the present quire, and the first high-altar stood just westward of a line drawn between the north and south mid-piers. These piers terminate in a "spire"-like design of three storeys. The lower two-thirds of the north wall is part of the earliest building. At the base a discoloured band of masonry testifies to the damage done by the fire of the first burning. Above this, the wall has been repaired and altered, and on it can be traced the outline of an inner arcading similar to that of the clerestory windows of the south wall of the transept. The clerestory windows and passage above were formed when the quire was extended. The large blue-limestone slab, lying on the floor near the arcade which opens to the south aisle, contained a great brass plate on which was engraved the figure of a bishop set within a niche surmounted by an elaborate canopy and bearing an inscription, the engraved lines of the whole design being infilled with black, red and white mastic. This monument was imported from one of the famous Franco-Flemish workshops of the City of Tournai and the stone came from a Tournai quarry. The slightly sunk ribbon-channels on the stone indicate the positions of the strips of metal which backed the brass at the joints of the plates, and the small holes filled with lead held the pins which attached the brass to the stone setting. The remains of another Tournai monument are to be seen in the floor of St. Mary's Aisle.

From the early fourteenth century until the time of the Reformation many fine monumental brasses were imported into Scotland from Flanders, but all that remain of these are a few of the Tournai stone slabs in which the brasses were set. There is a solitary and pathetic record in the form of a rubbing made over a hundred years ago of Scottish brass either from the Cathedral or the Parish Kirk of St. Giles which was demolished in 1826. The original brass has since disappeared. A record shows that the figure is of a man in civil costume and that the inscription was as follows:

## A

"Of yo<sup>r</sup> charite py for the soulls of  
John younge John Thoms Elyn and  
susann his children who<sup>r</sup> soull<sup>r</sup> ihu pdo"  
(Of your charity pray for the souls of John Young,  
John, Thomas, Ellen and Susan, his children;  
whose souls Jesus pardon.)

*The Presbytery*

The presbytery is a fine example of late thirteenth century or First Pointed Gothic architecture. It was abundantly lighted by a well-arranged group of windows<sup>1</sup> in the east gable, in addition to twin side-windows and a clerestory range of singular beauty. The lower windows of the east elevation had traceried heads, and those in the north and south walls three lights and traceried heads.

The floor is stepped at three levels; the High Altar stood on the highest of these and close to the east wall. The arcaded sedilia contain seats for four ecclesiastics arranged in successive tiers. The under side of the canopy takes the form of "dwarf vaulting" and the terminal finials are ornamented with a flower pattern. There is no trace of the piscina, but it probably occupied a position on the sill of the window immediately to the east of the sedilia. In the north wall is a recessed mural tomb with a cusped arched-canopy, and a crocketted gable. This feature is not an insertion but part of the presbytery design and was probably made for Bishop Archibald (1253-1299). Another bishop's monument is contained within the arcade which gives access to the north aisle. The canopy, which consisted of three crocketted gables with tall finials, extended across the arcade, the westernmost gable being set over an opening connecting the presbytery with the aisle. The remaining gables covered the tomb-chest, which has long

<sup>1</sup> During the adjustment of the vaulting in St. Mary's Aisle, fragments of the original tracery of the wheel window in the east gable were found. There is also evidence that there was a similar window in the west gate. In character these windows resemble the one at York Minster.

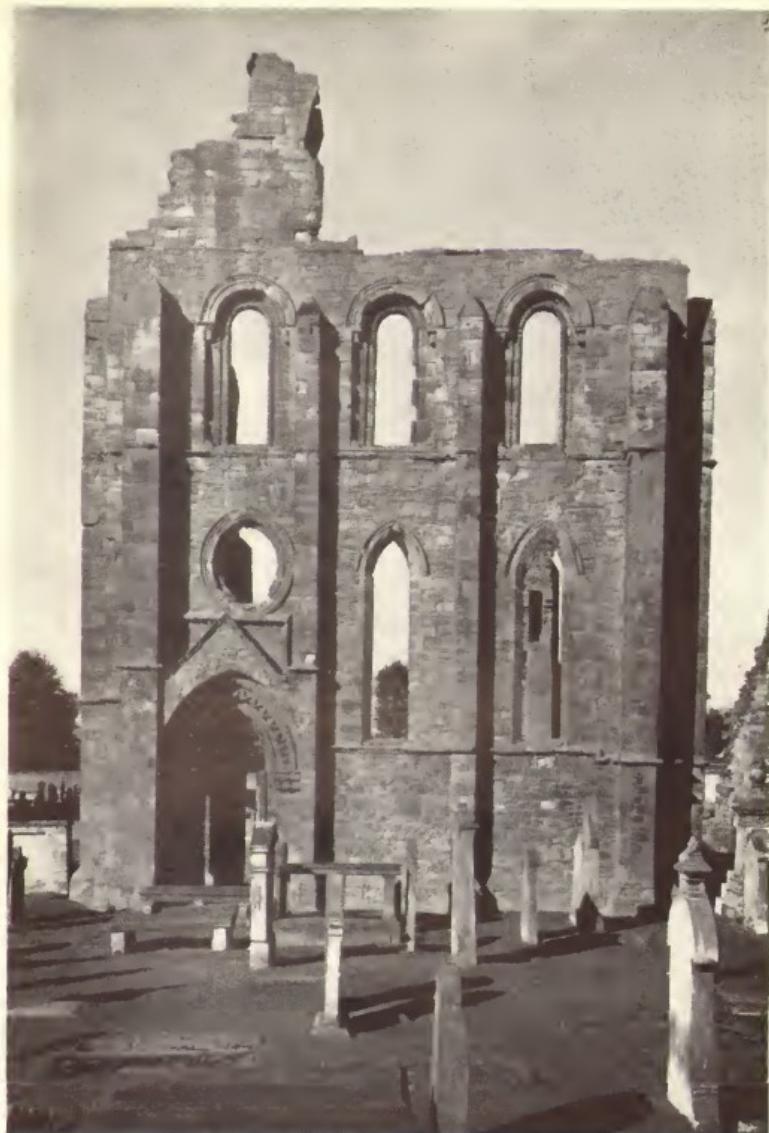


PLATE 3. *The south transept*

PLATE 4. *The cathedral from the north-west*



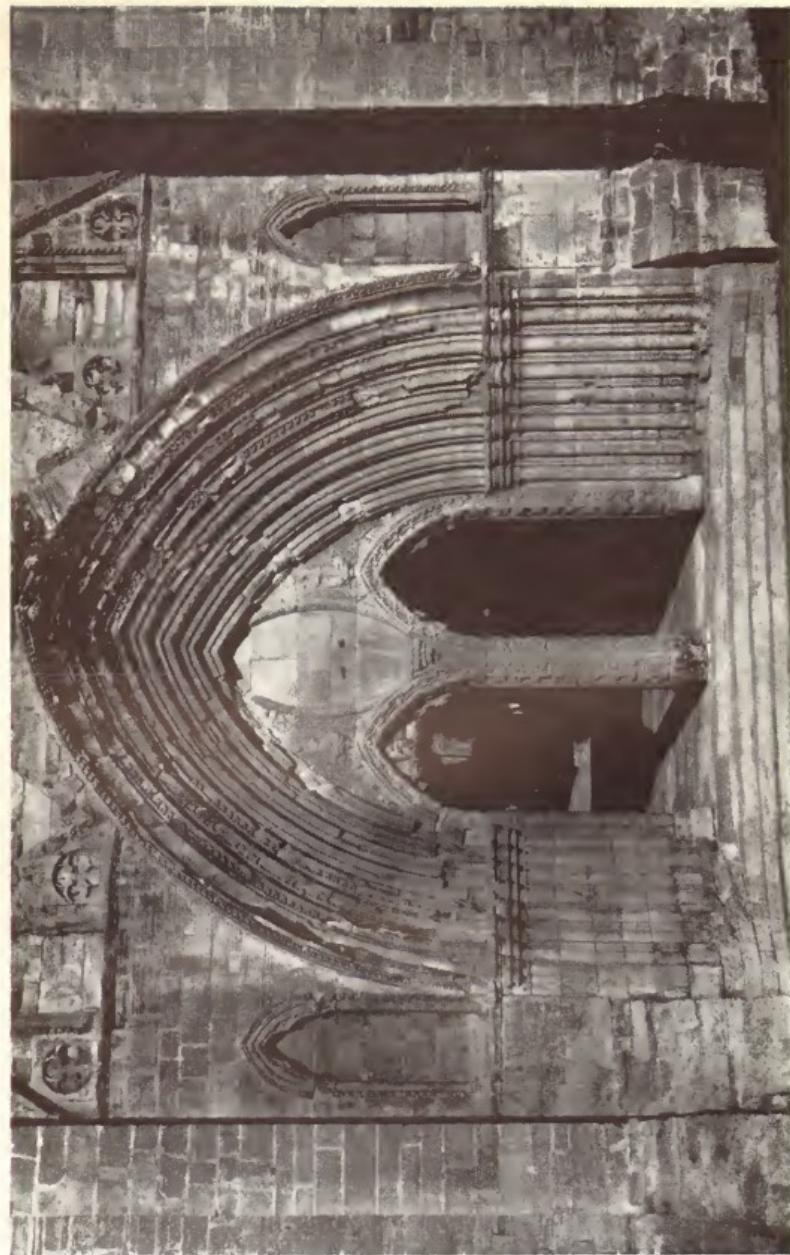
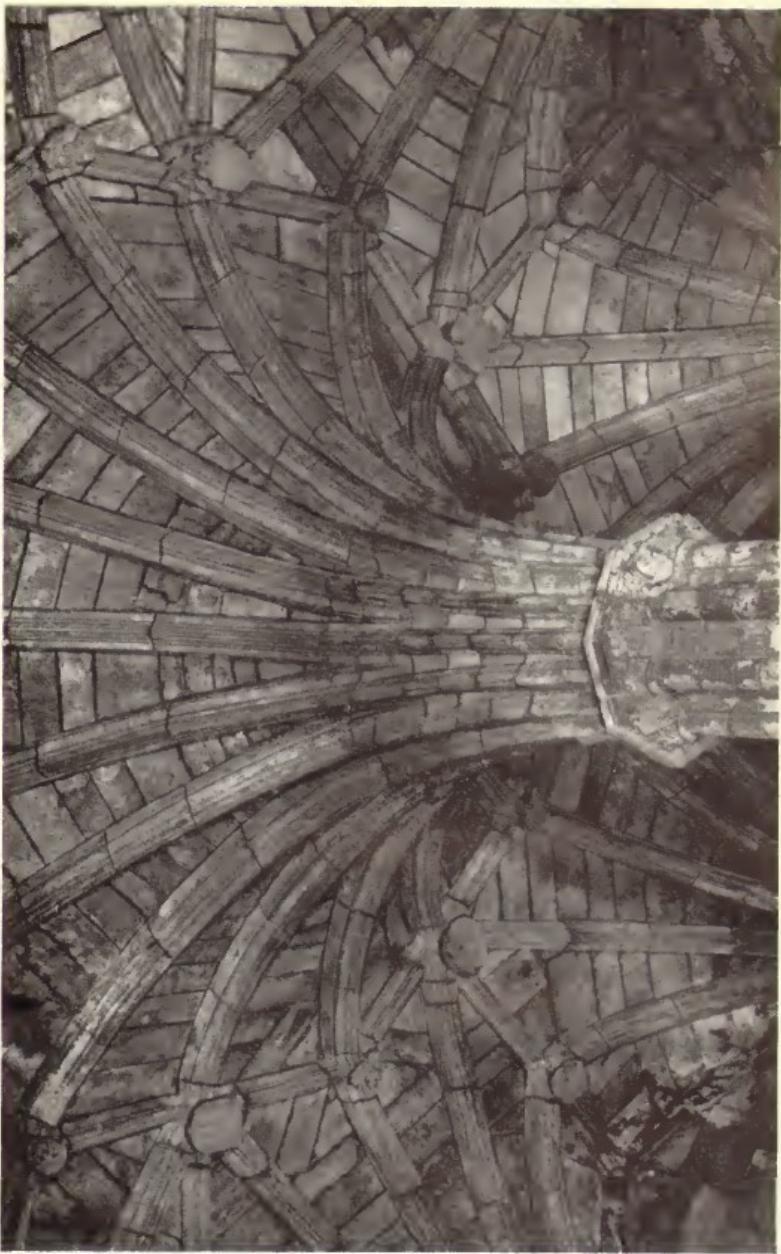


PLATE 5. *The west portal*

PLATE 6. *The chapter-house roof*



since been removed. The effigy which rested under the canopy was probably that now lying in a mural recess in the north wall in the second "bay" of the south quire-aisle. Consecration crosses are to be seen on the walls of the presbytery.

To the south of the quire is St. Mary's Aisle. It is the burial place of Bishop Winchester (1436-1460), Bishop Tulloch (1477-1482), and the Gordons of Huntly. Probably on account of its connection with the Gordon family this aisle has not been allowed to become totally ruinous. The rib-and-panel vaulting with carved bosses illustrates the nature of the ceilings which covered the corresponding aisle on the north side of the quire, the north aisles and part of the south aisles of the nave. The subjects carved on the bosses are typical of the period (thirteenth century); for instance, the representations of dragons and salamanders which writhe and twist among the foliage.<sup>1</sup> Immediately under the east windows are the remains of an altar; part of the window-sill above it has been cut away to make room for a retable. To the north of this altar is the mural tomb of Bishop Winchester, the best preserved of the pre-Reformation monuments. The crocketed ogival arch of the recess has been cusped on its underside, and the buttress-like features flanking the tomb carry shields on which were painted the coat of arms of the bishop. The inscription in Gothic lettering is on the sloping edge of the cover of the panelled tomb-chest; part of it has been cut out in relief—the rest is left unfinished. It appears to read:

bis jacet recolende memo: Jobanes Winnebestair dns  
ephus moravien:q-obiit-terti-dei-mee Apil Uno dni MCCCCCLR

On the underside of the arched recess are to be seen contemporary drawings in black and red lime of four censing "angels". It is probable that colour treatment was applied to the whole monument. The recumbent figure of the bishop is attired in eucharistic vestments, the mitred head rests on a pillow, and the sandalled feet on a "lion". The long pastoral staff lies on the left side of the effigy, the crook being in line with the face. The tomb recess in the second bay of the aisle is of fifteenth-century date, and in it lies a fourteenth-century effigy of a bishop in eucharistic vestments, probably removed from the monument in the arcade on the north side of the presbytery. The foot-rest is carved with the "lion and lamb" motif, and the canopy of the niche which encloses the figure bears on its dexter side the royal arms of Scotland and on the sinister side the arms of Moray.<sup>2</sup> The figure probably

<sup>1</sup> Excellent examples of these carvings from the ruined aisles are laid out for inspection in the first-floor room of the north-western tower.

<sup>2</sup> These arms also appear on the seal of this Bishop.

represents Bishop John Pilmore (1326-1362). In the centre of the aisle and over the burial vault of the Gordons, is the monument of the first Lord Huntly. The effigy, now defaced, is shown in the robe of the Lord Chancellor of Scotland, with a poniard hanging from the girdle. The inscription round the bevelled edge of the slab on which the effigy rests reads:

bic jacet nobis et potens dñs alterāder gordote primus  
comes de buntlie dns de gordone et badzenoth qui obiit  
apud buntlie 15 iunti anno dñi 1470.

This is an example of the early use of Arabic numerals in Scotland. The Earl's full achievement of arms appears on the south side of the tomb, underneath is the motto "Byd-And".

The recumbent figure in armour which lies on a composite pedestal is that of De le Hay of Lochloy, but it is not in its original position. The heraldry is displayed on the jupon as it is in the case of the contemporary effigies of Innes and Dunbar. This inscription reads:

bic jacet willis de le bay quddā dns de lochbior qui obiit  
viii die mēce decebris ano dñi mccccrrii āte piciet.

Set into the aisled floor are several grave-slabs from the tombs of ecclesiastics. These bear their respective heraldic shields, a cross on a stepped base, a chalice with paten, a service book. The following personages are commemorated: a rector of Rothes called Leslie who died in 1520; Thomas Leslie, rector of Kingussie, who died 8th May, 1525; Thomas Calder, a percentor of Ross, who died 8th September, 1519; James Lochart (1480) and his brother Robert, Canon (Singer). Two monuments of this type, removed for protection from St. Mary's Aisle to the ground-floor chamber of the western tower, commemorate William Lyd, sub-deacon of Moray, who died 1504, and James Leslye, rector of Kingussie and Rothes, who died March, 1547. Most of the post-Reformation grave-slabs are memorials to members of the Gordon family and display their coat of arms. There are also slabs commemorating Donald Irvine and Elizabeth Gordon, 1623; Lucretia Gordon, "spous to George Cumine" sometime Provost of Elgin who died 1668; Alex. Gordoune of Strathawin (1622) and William Calder of Spynie, a Provost of Elgin, who died in 1690. Set on the south wall between the two easternmost windows is an eighteenth-century grey-and-white marble monument, which was not made in Scotland, displaying the portrait bust in bas-relief of

Henrietta Duchess of Gordon, a daughter of Charles Mordaunt, Earl of Peterburgh, who died in 1760.

The north quire aisle is very ruinous; the easternmost bay only is now vaulted. There is a piscina in its south wall.

### *The Chapter-House*

A vestibule which was ceiled with a rib-and-panel vault leads from the north aisle to the chapter-house. The entrance had twin doorways with a traceried head. The small sacristy (?), with its slightly ornamented basin, was entered by a doorway in the east wall of the passage; it is of fifteenth-century date. This place is associated with the story of the infancy of General Anderson.<sup>1</sup> The construction of the chamber has necessitated the closing up of a window in the north aisle. The chapter-house doorway has carved caps of early design and "dog-tooth" enrichment. This is original work, but the inner mouldings and the detail of the doorway within belong to the reconstruction period. The chapter-house is octagonal on plan; originally it was ceiled in timber, but after the 1390 fire the central pillar of stone and the rib-and-panel ceiling of highly developed design were introduced. The traceried windows were remodelled to a smaller size and the walls within the building were repaired with the exception of the area over the entrance doorway. Immediately to the east of the entrance is a small doorway giving access to a wheel-stair leading to the roof chamber. Facing the entrance there are five canopied seats which were occupied by the high dignitaries of the Cathedral Chapter, while plain stone-benching to accommodate other members of the Chapter is carried round the remaining walls below the windows. The interior is enriched with stone carvings, many of which are of interest to the archaeologist or to the lover of the works of the mediæval sculptor. Oak leaves and acorns, grapes and vine leaves decorate the corbels of the arcaded seats. Odd "animals" and amusing "humans", including a jester, support the angle shafts. Grimacing demon-faces look down from the corbels set high in the window in-goes, while one of these window corbels depicts a fox habited as a friar and holding a stole, preaching to the geese, and another a gowned dwarf with a conical hat, seated on a chair, holding a large flagon in his right hand and the leaf of a tree in the left. The moulded pillar has a lectern supported by two "angels". The moulded cap of the pillar bears an oak-leaf enrichment, the Royal Arms of Scotland surmounted by a crown, a shield with the emblems of the Passion, the coat of arms of Bishop

<sup>1</sup> General Anderson enlisted as a drummer in the Hon. East India Company's service and left Elgin some £70,000 to build and endow "the Elgin Institute for the support of Old Age and Education of Youth".

Andrew Stuart (1482-1501) surmounted by a mitre, a shield charged with the Five Wounds of Christ, the Cross, and the Crown of Thorns; St. Andrew on his cross; the Royal Arms; a shield charged with the Five Wounds. The vaulting of the chapter house is of stellar pattern and contains twenty-four carved bosses. Of these, eight are grotesque human masks; eight leaf or flower patterns; and the others a Christ in Majesty set within a vesica-shaped panel, a figure of a bishop holding a pastoral staff, his right hand raised in blessing, the Royal Arms surmounted by a crown, a dragon, a shield portraying the emblems of Our Lord's Passion, viz. the cross, crown of thorns, spear, reed with hissop, pillar and scourge, seamless coat, ladder, dice, nails, hammer, pincers, lantern and cock.

The late seventeenth-century tombstones of Episcopalian bishops and their families in the chapter-house do not belong to the Cathedral, but were brought there from St. Giles' Parish Kirk when the latter was demolished in 1826.

The external masonry of the chapter-house is that of the original building and the outline of its windows can be seen surrounding the masonry of the later window insertions. The corbels of the window hood-mouldings are nearly all of the grotesque human-mask variety, but those of the restored window are "animal". To complete the design of the chapter-house on the outside, a roof of pyramidal form would require to be added and the tracery restored to the windows.

The exterior of the presbytery, especially its eastern façade, is an architectural composition combining graceful proportions and beauty of detail. Unfortunately the stone has greatly deteriorated in the last fifty years, through the action of chemicals in the smoke from the chimney of an old brewery which formerly stood close to the end of the Cathedral, and thus many of the finer mouldings and enrichments of the window jambs and the arcading have been destroyed. The tracery in the windows of the south quire aisle suggests to the mind the general appearance of those of similar size and period which were in other parts of the Cathedral Kirk.

### *The Burial Ground*

In the burial ground to the south are the remains of the "bishop's cross" with the socket stone. Late seventeenth and eighteenth-century burial enclosures were built against the graveyard walls and a few typical examples of these have been retained as records of a past burial custom. There are numerous grave slabs and memorials to members of the Glovers' Guild exhibiting their heraldic achievement, *i.e.* the cutter surmounted by St. Crispin's crown and by the symbols of their trade

and the shears. Two such memorials in the south wall are of particular interest.

The one, dated 1679, is that of James Young, glover, burgess in Elgin, and his family. Besides the emblems of his craft an hour-glass and a clock are depicted. On the central panel, between them, is the injunction "FEAR . GOD . O . MORTAL . MAN: WHAT . ART . THOU . DOING: REMEMBER . THY . EARTHAN: FOR . THY . CLAS . IS . EWNING;" and the surrounding panels are also inscribed.

The other, dated 1687, commemorates the family of John Geddes, another member of the same guild, and again portrays the glove and shears. A motto, "GRACE ME GUID, IN HOPE I BYDE", appears on the scroll and in the panel under the inscription is the following verse:

THIS WORLD IS A CITE  
FULL OF STREETS . &  
DEATH IS THE MERCAT  
THAT ALL MEN MEERTS  
IF LYFE WERE A THING  
THAT MONIE COULD  
BUY . THE POOR COULD  
NOT LIVE & THE RICH  
WOULD NOT DIE.

### *Sculptured Cross-slab*

At the west end of the quire and on its north side is a cross-slab of great archaeological interest which was unearthed near St. Giles' Kirk. On the front is a cross, standing on a rectangular base and ornamented with an interlaced pattern now much defaced. In the four angles of the cross are figures probably representing the four Evangelists, while the space below is occupied by an interlaced design with four animal heads meeting in the centre. On the back of the slab is a spirited hunting scene surmounted by decorated symbols.

In recent years the fabric of the Cathedral Kirk has received special treatment for its preservation by the Ancient Monuments Department of Ministry of Public Building and Works. Carved and moulded detached stones have been placed for protection in two of the chambers of the north-west tower. Corrections and improvements are to be made on the works of repair which were carried out in the nineteenth century.

## History

AT the beginning of the twelfth century Scotland as we know it scarcely existed; in no sense of the word was there a Scottish nation. Instead there was a group of large provinces—Moravia, Cat, Argyle, Galloway—centres in more or less resolute hostility to the unifying pressure of the Scottish Crown.

Between the Spey and the Dornoch Firth the great province of Moravia cherished the memories of its Pictish independence and under the rulers of the line of MacBeth nursed its undying grudge against two institutions which the Scottish Kings of the rival House of Canmore sought to impose upon them, Norman feudalism and the Roman Church, each of which connoted a higher form of political organisation than Scotland had ever known.

With the advent of King Alexander I (1106–1124) the first serious efforts for the unification and pacification of Scotland, other than by the sword, were begun. In the first year of his reign in June 1107 the Bishopric of Moray was founded, as also were those of St. Andrews and of Dunkeld.

Alexander, it may be mentioned, was the first of the Scottish kings to promote trading facilities in the North; possibly the knowledge that the religious institutions of the period developed commerce in their neighbourhood may have had something to do with the granting of these facilities, for trading communities meant men, and men were useful in time of war.

David I (1124–1153) confirmed these trading facilities, and developed them by founding the Priory of Urquhart in 1125 and the Abbey of Kinloss in 1131. During his reign loyal and wealthy Anglo-Norman barons and others, peacefully inclined, were induced to settle in the province, and in brief it may be said that it was only during the reign of Malcolm IV (1153–1165) that the great territorial district of Moravia came to an end as a separate entity.

Unfortunately the original writs and muniments pertaining to the first three centuries of the Bishopric were burned along with the Cathedral itself in 1390. Such charters, etc., as are recorded in the "Register of the Bishopric of Moray", a parchment volume of 169 leaves preserved in the National Library of Scotland, were undoubtedly collected in pursuance of a Papal Commission issued in 1394. These records are far from complete. Hence the paucity of our early information. This Register, transcribed and edited by Sheriff Cosmo Innes,



PLATE 7. Sculptured boss, chapter-house roof

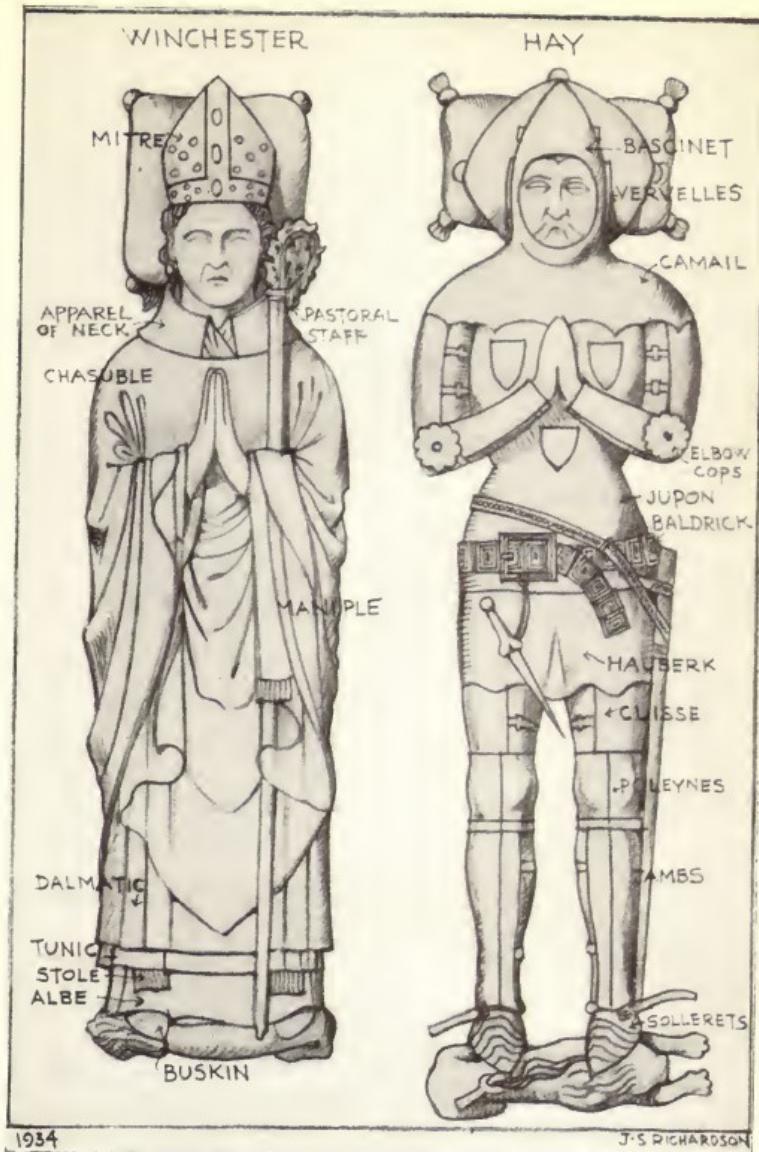


PLATE 8. *Effigies*

was published by the Barnartyne Club in 1837 under the title "*Registrum Episcopatus Moraviensis*".

Gregorius, a monk, is mentioned as the first Bishop of Moray. We have no records of the struggle in the province between the ancient Pictish Church of the Culdees and the Roman Church, but it is probable that Gregorius may have been a leading monk in the earlier Church and that by his being seduced or promoted—as in Dunkeld and in Ireland—the Roman Church was enabled gradually to strangle the individuality of the Culdees and take over their places of worship, sites consecrated by an immemorial series of religious services.

Birnie, a known Culdee foundation, was the seat of the diocese during the rule of the first four bishops—Gregorius, William (1158–1161), who was Papal Legate in Scotland in 1160, Felix (1162–1171), in whose favour deeds are first recorded, and Simon de Tocet (1171–1184). For a short period during the time of Richard (1187–1203) its place was taken by Kinneddar, another Culdee centre. Thereafter Spynie—still another Culdee centre—became the seat of the diocese, suggesting the gradual absorption of the older forms of religion, for, when history and legend intermingle, logical inference is all that can be aimed at.

Richard was the first of the Bishops about whom we know anything. He was a special favourite of King William the Lion (1165–1214), to whom he had been chaplain. King William frequently resided within the diocese, and besides enjoining that "my Bailiffs of Moray . . . shall yearly make good the full and entire said tenth of my returns to Bishop Richard and his successors", he heaped upon the See great gifts of land. It is worthy of note that the ancient possessions of the Church consisted, not of tithes alone, but of lands scattered over the province, and in view of the condition of the country at that period it was undoubtedly a step towards pacification to throw such property into the hands of those whose duty it was to inculcate peace.

Richard foresaw that the old province was entering upon a period of prosperity through the settlement of the aforesaid barons such as Freskinus de Moravia and Berowald de Innes, in conjunction with those descendants of the old Celtic families who had embraced the new order. If he did not actually conceive the idea of transforming the large and important Culdee Church of the Holy Trinity which stood a little to the north-east of the Elgin of that date into a building worthy of being the Cathedral Kirk of the diocese, he certainly furthered it, and in this he had the support of King William's princely gifts. William the Lion was otherwise a great benefactor to the province. He confirmed to his burgesses in Moray their "free hanse"—the right

of free trade—and his charters are full of expressions of protection and regard for them.

Authorities agree that the existing ruins of this Church point to its erection prior to 1200. It may have been completed in Bishop Richard's time; that it was as early as the time of his successor Bishop Bricius Douglas (1203–1223) we may accept as a fact. Bricius, who was residing at Spynie early in his incumbency, applied to Pope Innocent III to have the Cathedral of the See, previously undefined, to be fixed at the "Sancte Trinitatis de Spyny", and by a Papal Bull issued on the 7th Day before the Ides of April 1207, the Bishops of St. Andrews and Brechin with others were appointed to carry out the consecration services, which they did. The foundations of this Church were traceable until recent years. They showed a building of simple character with walls partly clay-built, the dimensions being 74 feet long and 35 feet wide.

Now, Bricius Douglas was a very talented and energetic prelate. He founded a College of Canons eight in number, gave his Cathedral a Constitution founded on the usage of Lincoln and in other directions laid the foundations of the glorious future of the bishopric. Yet, almost immediately after the consecration at Spynie we find him, with the King's sanction, imploring the Pope to have the Cathedral transferred from Spynie to the Church of the Holy Trinity "juxta Elgyn", leading one to suppose that there had been some misunderstanding over the two churches of the Holy Trinity, and further, that this church "juxta Elgyn" was then in existence and was the edifice more suitable for stately ritual and processional ceremonies. The translation was, however, granted only in the first year of the incumbency of his successor Bishop Andrew (1224–1242), and on the 15th, some say the 19th day of July, 1224, the impressive service of consecration was performed by Gilbert, Bishop of Caithness, and the Church of the Holy Trinity "juxta Elgyn" was transformed into the Cathedral Church of the diocese of Moray.

Considering the times and state of the province, the rapid growth in power and resources of the Bishops of Moray was truly remarkable. In 1115 we find the first Bishop with possibly a clay-built wattle building at Birnie, and in little more than a century later the See was possessed of one of the finest Cathedrals then existing in the Kingdom.

Bishop Andrew was a scion of the powerful family of de Moravia, whose descendants are still of the highest rank in Scotland. He had been one of the two delegates sent to Lincoln by Bishop Bricius and as he had all the ecclesiastical ambition of his predecessor, the magnificence of Lincoln Cathedral had doubtless fired his imagination. Thanks to growing revenues and to truly splendid endowments from his relatives

of Duffus and Petty, Andrew was in a position to embellish and enrich his Cathedral. He was the more able to carry out improvements through the liberality of Elgin's greatest benefactor, King Alexander II (1214-1249), who made large gifts to the Cathedral and was responsible further for the founding of the *Maison Dieu*, the Black Friars, the Grey Friars, and Pluscarden Priory. He also founded a chaplaincy within the Cathedral for the soul of King Duncan.

Andrew was an outstanding prelate of whom we would gladly know more. He increased the Chapter or College of Canons from eight to twenty-three—seven dignitaries, sixteen canons—of which numbers it consisted for some 300 years.<sup>1</sup> At this time it is recorded there were two and twenty vicars-choral and about as many chaplains.

Bishop Andrew died in 1242 and his remains were deposited in the south side of the choir under the large stone of blue marble.

In a short history it is advisable to detail the Chapter as fully constituted with the ecclesiastical titles and country residential privileges of its Canons. The Bishops' palaces or castles were at Birnie, Kinneddar, and Spynie.<sup>2</sup> The manses and gardens of the other dignitaries and canons clustered round the Cathedral, all enclosed within a strong precinct wall of stone six and one-half feet broad, about four yards high and some 900 yards in circuit, parts of which still exist, and thus they formed a distinct community known as the 'Collegium' or Chanonyry. Two of the manses are still inhabited, the Dean's now the College, and the Archdeacon's—the South College.

The area of the diocese coincided roughly with that of the old province. It extended on the north along the Moray Firth from the Spey to Ross-shire, on the west it included the country adjoining Loch Ness with the valleys of the Nairn and Findhorn, on the south Badenoch and Strathspey with the valleys of the Avon and the Fiddich, on the east, a part of Banffshire, including Strathisla, Strathbogie in Aberdeenshire and stretching thence to the Spey about Fochabers.

The next three Bishops—Simon (1242-1252), Ralph, who died before consecration, and Archibald (1253-1298), who chose Kinneddar Castle for his residence—have left no particular records of their incumbencies. During this half-century two misfortunes befell the Cathedral. In 1244 it received some considerable injury, no one knows what; and in 1270, according to Fordoun, it was damaged by fire—which fire must have been very disastrous as well as wilful, the manses also having been burned.

<sup>1</sup> One canon was added in 1542.

<sup>2</sup> He had no "town house", the ruined building adjoining the Cathedral and so designated having been the mausoleum of the Preceptor.

David de Moravia (1299-1326) who succeeded, stands out as a strong and commanding individual like all the other recorded members of the family. He was one of the chief leaders in the North during the War of Independence and, to quote Mr. Evan M. Barron "when Andrew de Moray fell covered with wounds and glory his uncle David de Moravia, Bishop of Moray, took up his work and carried it on with a thoroughness, a devotion, a courage and a singleness of purpose to which there is no parallel in the history of the War". He was excommunicated by order of Edward I of England and fled to Norway, returning to the diocese after Edward's death in 1307. Bishop David died in 1325, and was buried in the quire. He bequeathed funds for the benefit of four poor scholars from Moray studying in Paris, the beginnings of an institution which later became known as The Scots College at Paris, and which was administered by the Bishops of Moray till the Reformation.

John Pilmore (1326-1362) was the next Bishop. He was succeeded by Alexander Bur (1362-1397), during whose old age fearful destruction fell upon the Cathedral. Alexander Stewart, Earl of Buchan and Lord of Badenoch, the second son of King Robert II, known for his fierceness as the "Wolf of Badenoch", having a quarrel with the bishop, who had excommunicated him, swooped down from his stronghold at Lochindorb in May, 1390, and with his "wyld Wykkes Heland-men burned the town of Forres, the choir of the Church of St. Laurence there also the manse of the Archdeacon, and in the month of June following in the Feast of the Blessed Botulph Abbot he burned the whole town of Elgin, 18 noble and beautiful manses of Canons and Chaplains and what was further still more cursed and lamentable the noble and highly adored Church of Moray with all the books Charters and other valuable things of the country therein kept".

This crime nearly broke the heart of the aged prelate, and his petition to King Robert III to assist towards the rebuilding, as recorded in "Reg. Ep. Morav." is pitiful in its pathos. The King made an annual contribution and the general response to the appeal must have been substantial, for when Alexander Macdonald, son of the Lord of the Isles "spuzied" the Chanonyry in July, 1402, during the time of Bishop Spynie (1397-1406), the plunder was rich enough to entice him to return in the following October. But this time he was met at the west precinct gate by the Bishop and Canons who, in short, "so worked upon the feelings of Alexander and his Captains that they confessed their faults and earnestly begged to be absolved".

John Innes succeeded in 1407 and ruled seven years. On his death the Chapter met and bound themselves that whoever should be elected bishop should annually apply one-third of his revenue in re-

pairing the Cathedral until all should be completed. Bishop Leighton, who was consecrated in 1414, was translated to Aberdeen in 1422. David succeeded and held office until 1429. He is omitted from some lists and there is obscurity about his episcopate. Columba de Dunbar, younger son of George, tenth Earl of March, and a nephew of the Earl of Moray, was then promoted to the See. The year of his consecration is doubtful, but he was Bishop in 1429. In 1433 there is a record of a safe-conduct permitting him to pass through England on his way to Rome, and another the following year when he journeyed to the Council of Basle. He died in 1435.

In John Winchester we have a real and vivid personality. He came to Scotland in the suite of King James I, with whom he was in high favour. He was successively appointed Prebendary of Dunkeld. Provost of Linchuden, Lord Clerk-Register, and in 1437 he was consecrated Bishop of Moray. King James employed him in various State affairs, including that of Master of Works. It was during his time that the lands of the Church were erected into the Barony of Spynie with full Regality rights.<sup>1</sup> The temporal influence of the Bishops of Moray was thus growing even more luxuriantly than their spiritual. Bishop Winchester died in 1458 and was buried in St. Mary's Aisle.

James Stewart of the family of Strathavon, Lord High Treasurer, succeeded in 1458, and died in 1460. He was followed by his brother David in 1461. David excommunicated the first Earl of Huntly for resisting payment of rents. Irritated by this, the Earl threatened to pluck the Bishop out of his pigeon-holes, in scorn of the mean dwelling at Spynie at that date. But the haughty prelate, who was rebuilding, rejoined that he should by and by have a nest that the Earl and all his clan should not be able to pluck him out of, and the great tower at Spynie Palace known as "Davy's" tower, although much shattered today, survives to show that the Bishop's reply was no empty boast. David Stewart died in 1473.

William Tulloch, Keeper of the Privy Seal, previously Bishop of Orkney,<sup>2</sup> was translated to Moray in 1477, and appears to have been more of a politician than a cleric. He was one of the ambassadors to Denmark to negotiate the marriage of James III and the "Lady Margaret", an alliance which placed the Orkney and Shetland Islands in the possession of the Scottish Crown. He died in 1482. Andrew Stewart, third son of the Black Knight of Lorn and of his lady, the widow of James I, was the next Bishop (1482-1501). He held various high appointments, including that of Keeper of the Privy Seal.

He was succeeded by Andrew Forman (1501-1514) one of the most

<sup>1</sup> Investing the grantee with all the rights the King enjoyed in the territory—a formidable concession which too often resulted in the Crown being set at defiance.

accomplished and successful diplomats of his age. He was a great pluralist, being Commendator<sup>1</sup> of the Abbeys of Dryburgh and Pittenweem and of Cottingham in England. King James IV appointed him Ambassador to England, and later to France. From thence he went to Rome, and for the triumph of his diplomacy Pope Julian II appointed him Papal Legate for Scotland. He was nominated Archbishop of Bruges but in 1514 was exchanged to St. Andrews.

With James Hepburn (1516-1523) the bishopric appears to have reached its zenith of wealth and magnificence. He was the third son of Adam, Lord Hailes, and brother of Patrick, first Earl of Bothwell, and among other high offices held that of King's Lord Treasurer.

Bishop Schaw (1524-1537) had the character of a man of great virtue. He also was Ambassador to England. Alexander Stewart, who succeeded in 1537, was the son of Alexander, Duke of Albany, son of King James II. He was the first Prior of Whithorn, but not much is known of him. He died in 1535. With Patrick Hepburn (1535-1573), son of the first Earl of Bothwell, we come to the last Roman Catholic Bishop of Moray. He had been Prior of St. Andrews, and was Commendator of the Abbacy of Scone.

Bishop Hepburn was one of the commissioners who negotiated the marriage of Mary Queen of Scots with the Dauphin of France. During his incumbency there took place within the Cathedral a fight, known as "The Bloody Vespers", between the then two powerful families in Moray, those of Innes and Dunbar. On 1st January, 1554-1555, William Innes of that ilk and 32 others with 80 followers all armed and "of ancient feud and forethought felony" came to the service with intent "for the slauthters" of Alexander Dunbar, Prior of Pluscarden, David Dunbar, Dean of Moray, and sundry other Dunbar laymen. By a remarkable coincidence James Dunbar of Tarbert and twelve others, with 60 Dunbar followers, had also come under cover of night with the intention of killing the Laird of Innes and his servants. The scene of violence and bloodshed may be imagined, and as an aggravation of the offence the murderous onset was made "in the presence of the Holy Sacrament". Beyond several "burnings" we know little of the fight, certainly it was not decisive, for the feud was kept going for a further twenty years. Wise in his generation Patrick Hepburn early realised that the Reformation was not a matter to be opposed, by spiritual weapons at any rate, and by 1540 he had begun the alienation of Church lands, thus providing for his future maintenance and that of his numerous family. When the storm burst in 1560 he was in a position

<sup>1</sup> When a bishop found his episcopal income too small the master was arranged by giving him one or more additional benefices as Commendator. It was not essential that he should perform any of the duties, but he drew the revenues.

not merely to brave but to defy the Reformation. Shutting himself within the Palace of Spynie, he carried on his unprincipled life until his death in June 1573.

The Bishopric of Moray thus lasted for a period of about 450 years and during that period the influence of the Bishops had been distinctly for good, for, with the exception of Patrick Hepburn, they did well by the Cathedral and the Church lands. It was they who looked after the sick and the poor, the education and general well-being of the people, and it was their culture and learning that induced men of talent and position to reside within the diocese.

The last public celebration of Mass within the Cathedral took place a whole generation after the Papal authority had been proscribed. After the Battle of Glenlivet on 4th October, 1594, when the leaders of the Catholic forces, the Earls of Huntly and Errol, had defeated the Government forces under Argyll, the party realised that it had no outside support. The Earls and their adherents, it is recorded, assembled within the Cathedral at Elgin to discuss the situation. After Mass had been celebrated, James Gordon, a Jesuit priest and uncle to Huntly, descended from the high altar and from the steps of the chancel implored his kinsmen and friends to remain in their own land and hazard all for their faith. It was in vain. The spirit of the Gordons and Hays was broken, and early in 1595 Errol embarked at Peterhead for the Continent, as did Huntly at Aberdeen.

The story of the decadence of the Cathedral is painful. Through Bishop Hepburn's profuse alienation of its property no Church funds remained for its upkeep. It was never used by Presbyterian ministers nor Episcopal bishops, and not being a Parish Church none claimed the responsibility of maintaining it. The lead roofing was stripped by order of the Regent Moray and his Privy Council in 1567, and although two years later they spoke of restoration, the Regent's murder must have put a stop to the good intention. With the dispersal of the remnants of the Catholic influence in the district after the Battle of Glenlivet it would appear from the Records of the Kirk Session of Elgin that the Cathedral (or Chanonry Kirk as it is therein designated) and burial ground had indeed fallen on evil days. The Minute of 21 December, 1599, reads: "Anent the Chanonrie Kirk—All profane pastyme inhibited to be usitt by any persones ather within the burgh or college and speciallie futballing through the toun, snaw balling, singing of carrellis or other prophane sangis, guysing, pypying, violing, and dancing and speciallie all thir aboue specifeit forbiddin in the Chanonrie kirk or kirk yaerd thairoff (except futball). All women and lassis forbidden to haunt or resoirt their under the paynis of publick repentans, at the leist during this tyme quhilk is superstitiouslie keippt

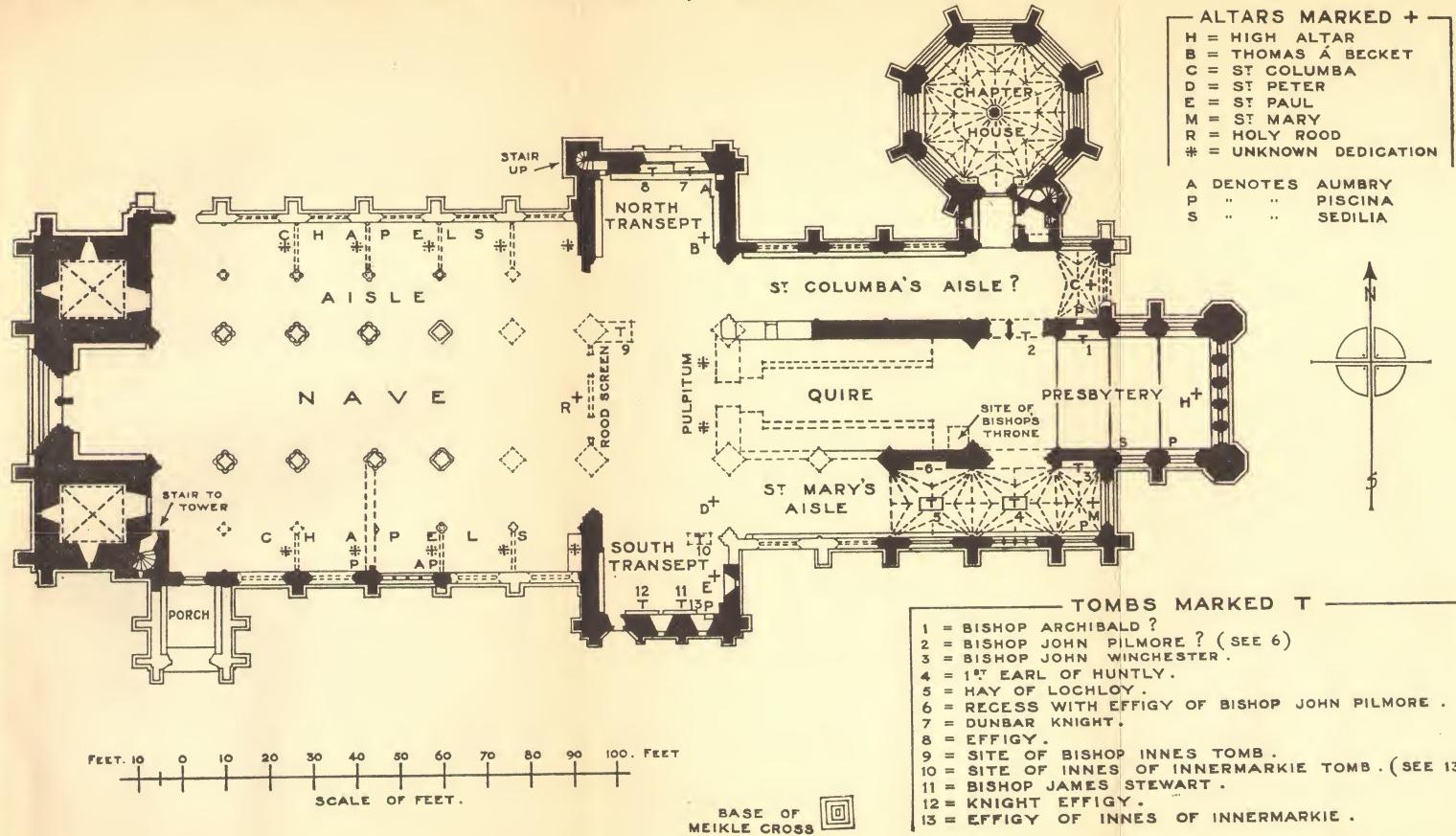
fra the XXV day of December to the last of Januar next thairastir,  
quhillk ordinance the minister sall intimat furt out of the pulpit".  
For fully fifty years after this, inhibitions of a like nature and aent the  
haunting of the Chanonry Kirk by the superstitious are recorded.

With the roofs exposed, the elements gradually worked destruction. In December, 1637, the choir rafters were blown down. In 1640 the beautiful painted wood Rood Screen described by Spalding as having never "faidit or evanishit" was torn down by the Minister of Elgin and some ardent Covenanters. Tradition avers that, when Cromwell's soldiers were lodged here in 1651-1658, they destroyed the tracery work, especially that of the great west window, as well as mutilating the statues and carvings. Some of their bullets and bullet marks are still visible. The chapter-house remained tolerably entire for a century and a half, being used for Regality Courts; and at intervals from 1671 to 1731 the Six Incorporated Trades of Elgin held their meetings in it. On the morning of Peace (Easter) Sunday, 1711, the great central tower fell, and thereafter destruction proceeded apace. For well-nigh a century the ruins were used as a quarry, even the Magistrates in 1800 permitting stones to be taken for the building of their Academy.

In 1807, when the place had become a dump for rubbish, public opinion at last awoke to the scandal, an enclosure wall was built, and a keeper appointed. In 1816, and again in 1820, the attention of the Barons of Exchequer<sup>2</sup> was directed to the deplorable condition of the Cathedral and by their timely help measures were adopted for preserving one of the western towers. In 1823 they were induced to give a grant towards the keeper's salary and John Shanks was appointed, a sort of Old Mortality, whose delight it was to labour among the ruins. In 1833 he disclosed the four steps at the West front doorway. Interest was now thoroughly aroused, the accumulated debris was gradually cleared away, the floor level reached and the foundations of pillars laid bare. Then the Crown came to the rescue and for well-nigh a century now the Cathedral ruins have been the especial care, first of H.M. Commissioners of Woods and Forests, and latterly of Ministry of Public Building and Works.

<sup>2</sup> A designation in Scotland for H.M. Treasury previous to 1833.

# THE CATHEDRAL OF MORAY , ELGIN





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